

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 102829 TOSEC 110260

EXDIS MILITARY ADDRESSEE HANDLE SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOL TEL SENT ACTIONSECSTATE FROM AMMAN DTD 28 APR 1976 QUOTE

S E C R E T AMMAN 2265

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON FROM PICKERING

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS,JO, US, SA, UR

SUBJECT: JORDAN AIR DEFENSE -- TIMING CONSIDERATION

REF: (A) AMMAN 2225, (B) JIDDA 3036, (C) STATE 110211

1. AT RISK OF FURTHER BURDENING YOU WITH UNNECESSARY
PAPER, I ADDRESS AGAIN THE ISSUE OF TIMING (REFTEL A).

2 I HAVE NO INTEREST IN SUGGESTING ANY CHANGE IN OUR
BASIC STRATEGY; TIMING IS IN THE MAIN A TACTICAL ISSUE.
EVEN IF JORDANIANS BEGIN

TO MAKE MORE PUBLIC STATEMENTS, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD
CONTINUE TO PURSUE OUR STRATEGY OF WORKING OUT BEST

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POSSIBLE TWO-PHASE APPROACH TO FUNDING.

3. THE MAJOR TIMING PROBLEM CONCERNS WHAT THE JORDANIANS MIGHT DO TO MAKE THE LAST FEW DAYS COMMUNICATIONS SCREW UP BETWEEN THEM AND THE SAUDIS CHILD'S PLAY. KING IS DISCONSOLATE AND PROBABLY NOW STEELED TO TRY TO RUN THE SOVIET COURSE. FURTHER NON-COMMUNICATION FROM US RUNS RISK, AS IT DID AS RESULT OF WASHINGTON MEETINGS, OF PRODUCING MORE OUTBURSTS FROM HERE. I LEAVE TO YOU TO JUDGE THE EFFECT ON THE SAUDIS. WHETHER THAT WILL BE, IF IT OCCURS, A FINAL BLOW TO THE PRESENT STRATEGY, I CANNOT SAY. I THINK THAT WITHOUT SOMETHING FURTHER FOR THE KING, AS SUGGESTED IN AMMAN 2225, WE RUN A HIGH RISK OF HAVING JORDANIANS THROUGH PUBLIC HANDLING OF THE DEAL KILL OFF SAUDI OPTION AT \$300 MILLION LEVEL, OR POSSIBLY AT ANY LEVEL. IT IS NOT LOGICAL, BUT WHEN KING IS TOLD WHAT TO DO OR WHAT NOT TO DO BY SOMEONE, AS WE HAVE SEEN IN THE PAST, HIS TENDENCY IS TO ACT IN CONTRARY FASHION.

4. PROBLEM OF TIMING HAS TWO PARTS, ASIDE FROM WHAT HAPPENS WITH SAUDIS. ONE IS WHAT U.S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT DOES ON CONTRACTS (ADDRESSED TO SOME EXTENT IN REF C) AND ON TRAINING, WHICH WE WILL ADDRESS IN SEPTEL. OTHER QUESTION IS JORDAN. HERE MY THINKING, IN ABSENCE OF SAUDI REPLY, STILL RUNS ALONG LINES OF SUGGESTING A MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY IN ORDER TO GET EXTENSION OF DEADLINE ON REMAINING QUIET. IT WOULD HAVE TO CONTAIN SOME SUBSTANCE. IDEA OF OUR HAVING MADE PROGRESS WITH SAUDIS IS IMPORTANT. JORDANIANS HAVE BEEN STRESSING IDEA OF A WHOLE PACKAGE, POSSIBLY BECAUSE THEY WANT TO MAXIMIZE SAUDI GENEROSITY, OR ALSO POSSIBLY, BECAUSE AS WE HAVE SEEN IN RECENT REPORT, JORDANIANS ERRONEOUSLY BELIEVE THAT PHASED APPROACH IS AT LEVEL OF A \$500 MILLION PACKAGE -- \$300 MILLION PLUS FROM JIDDA, THE REST IN FMSCR FROM US. PERHAPS A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE WITH SAUDIS AND OURSELVES IN TERMS OF 14 BATTERIES 100 GUNS AND NEEDED OPERATIONAL EQUIPMENT IN FIRST PHASE FUNDING WILL BE NECESSARY. WE OF COURSE RUN A RISK WITH THIS OF OVER-COMMITMENT. FINALLY CONTACT AND TRAINING EXTENSION
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WOULD ALSO HELP AS WOULD SOME DATE CERTAIN. ON THAT POINT SOVIET AIR FORCE MISSION ARRIVES HERE MAY 17 AND JORDANIANS WANT TIME TO PREPARE. FINALLY, BIGGEST PROBLEM WILL BE PUBLICITY. IN MY JUDGMENT EVEN IF JORDANIANS WENT QUIETLY (BUT NOT PUBLICLY) AHEAD WITH SOVIETS, WE COULD HOPE TO TRY TO AVOID ANOTHER CONTRETEMPS WITH SAUDIS.

5. MY BEAR NOW IS THAT WITHOUT SOMETHING FURTHER FROM ME
BY AT LATEST FRIDAY, APRIL 30, JORDANIANS WILL ASSUME THAT DEAL
REALLY IS FINISHED AS FAR AS WE AND SAUDIS ARE CON-
CERNED.THEY WILL THEN GO AHEAD IN THEIR OWN WAY TO
MAKE THAT A CERTAINTY, NOT BECAUSE THEY WANT TO OR BE-
CAUSE IT IS LOGICAL, BUT BECAUSE THEY ARE NOW IN A
POSITION, AS THEY SEE IT,WHERE SOVIET OPTION IS THE
ONLY ALTERNATIVE AND THEY WILL WANT TO MAXIMIZE THE
VALUE TO THEM OF THAT OPTION.
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